

Tameside – Stalybridge Children's Centre

School Crescent Ridge Hill Stalybridge Greater Manchester SK15 1EA

Inspection dates	16–17 September 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- A majority, but not a large majority of families are registered and access the group's services.
- Systems used to record data are not fully developed. This hampers the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management to monitor the uptake of the group's services by families.
- The proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed at six to eight weeks is well below the national average and a high percentage of mothers smoke during pregnancy.
- Not enough eligible two-year-olds are being supported to access funded nursery education places.
- Partnership working with providers of further adult education is under developed. In addition, adult learners are not effectively tracked to show the progress that they make.
- Although parents have a voice at the group they are yet to take an active role in decision-making and governance. For example, as representatives on a parents' forum or the advisory board.

This centre/children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The skilled staff team and senior leaders work very well together to ensure the quality of practice and services continue to improve. They are passionate about improving the lives of families and they build strong, trusting relationships with them.
- Safeguarding is given high priority. Families identified by the group as most in need of their support benefit from well-coordinated provision from a wide range of services.
- Very good partnership work is in place. A range of professionals work well with the group's staff to drive improvement and address weakness.
- The group provides good support for private nurseries and childminders. The vast majority of children aged three- and four- years of age take up good quality early education funded places.

What does the centre group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the marketing of the group services to:
 - increase the percentage of parents and children registered and engaged in the group services
 - improve access to early education for vulnerable two-year olds who are eligible to funded places.
- Build on the close partnership working with health partners to:
 - reduce the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy
 - increase the number of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks.
- Increase participation rates in adult education and training by:
 - improving the promotion of training opportunities including courses in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and employability
 - monitoring enrolment onto training courses
 - systematically checking learners' progress to show the impact the group is having on their learning and identifying reasons for withdrawing from or non-completion of courses.
- Strengthen the role that parents play in the planning and development of services by increasing the numbers of parents from the reach area who are willing to become more involved in the governance of the group.
- Collect, analyse and use data more systematically to:
 - provide a basis for rational decision making
 - monitor and manage the provision
 - identify the impact that the group's activities have on children's and parents' well-being and lives.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres' that form part of this children's centre group are Ridge Hill Children Centre and Mill brook Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the Early Help strategic managers, staff and key partners. They met representatives from the advisory board. The inspectors reviewed satisfaction surveys and they took account of parents' views.

The inspectors visited the baby clinic which took place at Ridge Hill Children's Centre and the 'Cheeky Cherubs' group which took place at Millbrook Children's Centre.

They observed the group's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the group's self-evaluation, the area action plan, data and a selection of case files.

Inspection team

Sue Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Cathryn Parry	Additional inspector
Ken Fisher	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre group

Tameside-Stalybridge Children's Centre became operational in 2012. It consists of two centres, Ridge Hill Children's Centre and Millbrook Children's Centre, which are located approximately four miles apart. They cover the highly populated Ridge Hill and Stalybridge area.

The group delivers family support, health services and links are in place with adult learning providers. Quakers Nursery and Silver Springs Academy are co-located on the same site as Ridge Hill Children's Centre. The day care and school were not part of this inspection and their reports are available on the Ofsted website : www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage. There are approximately 1588 children under five years of age living in the community. Children generally enter early years provision with skills and knowledge below that typical for their age.

The majority of families live in areas ranked 30% most deprived nationally. Ridge Hill has some of the most deprived areas in the whole of the borough. Data shows that 26.1% of children live in workless households. The centre has identified teenage parents and children living in workless households in most need of their support. The main issue that some families face is domestic abuse.

A team manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre group. Tameside local authority Early Help team oversees the work of the group at a strategic level. The Early Years Adopter Steering group have merged to form the advisory board.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The group's premises are not in prominent positions. This makes it difficult to promote equality of opportunity and increase the numbers of families accessing services at the centres. In particular, those expecting children and the families the group has identified as in most need of their support, such as workless households. A website is in place but it is not up-to-date or well used. As a result, the effectiveness of strategies for encouraging families to participate in relevant services, including those who may be less likely to do so is not yet embedded.
- The majority of referrals for support to the centres are from health professionals. Close partnership work with midwives is helping to inform all prospective parents about the group's services. For example, at antenatal sessions, such as the baby clinic and 'Bumps and Breastfeeding'.
- The group has been particularly successful at engaging teenage parents with the help of youth workers and other professionals. Due to demand a specific group is available for teenage parents, which they can easily access via public transport. Unemployed parents are highly appreciative that the experiences offered are free of charge.
- A range of partners such as, social care, health and schools, work with the centre to help ensure that families whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable benefit from effective multi-agency assessments and good support. Families who access guidance within their own home are reminded of sessions running at the centres through helpful text messages. This helps to promote more regular attendance.
- A strong drive is in place to ensure that there are sufficient free education places for all two-year-olds. The promotion of these free places to eligible families has yet to have a good impact on the percentage of young children actually taking up places.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- A satisfactory range of universal and targeted services are provided for children and their families. Good partnership work with health professionals supports the group to tackle health inequalities, such as oral health. For example, low cost toothpaste and toothbrushes are distributed to tackle the high prevalence of dental cavities. However, the percentage of mothers smoking in pregnancy is high and the number of mothers breastfeeding, although slightly improving, remains low.
- 'Cook and Eat' programmes help parents to make healthy choices. They report a better understanding of fat, sugar and salt content of foods. They learn to confidently use recipes to make healthier meals at home. As a result, obesity in the Reception Year is not an issue in the area.
- Centre staff provide training and monitoring visits of private day-care providers and childminders to enhance and improve the quality of childcare practice. A sharp focus on communication development, access to 'Book Start' and groups such as 'Baby Babble' and 'Toddler Talk' is beginning to have a positive impact on speech and language development.
- Tracking of children's progress is restricted to those who attend centre services regularly. However, a local headteacher acknowledged a big improvement in children's school readiness. Recent data suggest children's entry level into school is slightly improving and is now much closer to national expectations.
- Family learning is promoted well through close links and partnership working with other centres and schools. A very large majority of parents who enrol on a parenting programme successfully complete them. A typical comment from a parent was, 'This place makes me feel comfortable no one judges me'. Parents improve their self-confidence, self-awareness, parenting skills and they learn to develop more positive family and social relationships.
- Opportunities for adults to gain information at the centres on the adult education and training available in the area to increase employability skills are very limited. Book resources are also limited. Therefore, the needs of adults who have low level numeracy and literacy skills are not being met.
- A few adults have attended introductory courses run in collaboration with Tameside College and Jobcentre Plus. They have benefited from work experience which led to permanent employment. However, the group does not have systems in place to record and check how well all adults do when they attend adult learning on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Requires improvement**

- Parents are regularly consulted about their views and ideas. For example, the successful 'Talk Time' sessions delivered at Ridge Hill Children's Centre improved parental involvement. However, the group does not have a parents' forum and no parents are members of the established advisory board. This weakens the opportunities for parents to influence the governance of the group and to hold managers to account for their decisions.
- Leadership, management and governance are adapting to a new delivery model. The local authority has managed a period of significant change very well by actively involving staff in the development of different ways of working. As a result, staff morale is high and this has a positive impact on parental satisfaction.
- Self-evaluation and monitoring of weaknesses is accurate. Leaders recognise where further work is required. For example, they know the fragmented method currently used to record data hampers their effectiveness to monitor and manage the group's performance. However, systems to record and analyse data are not yet fully embedded.
- Staff resources are shared well across a cluster of children centres. The experienced staff say they feel well supported and that they have regular professional supervisions. They attend a range of training to further enhance their practice and more effectively tackle the complex issues some families face to help reduce inequalities.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and a high priority is paid to the safety of children and their families. Case files are maintained to a good standard. Good support is available for children in need, looked after children and those who suffer from domestic abuse.
- Very close partnership working is a key strength of the group. Social care, the Early Help team,

family interventions and early years workers work extremely well together. The Common Assessment Framework process is used very well to coordinate effective early support to prevent the escalation of some difficult situations.

- Homestart provides structured training opportunities for adults to train to work as a volunteer which includes becoming a peer support for breastfeeding. Some volunteers have started to progress onto other training courses, such as health and social care, social work, and early years. Crèche facilities based at Ridge Hill Children's Centre help prevent barriers to adult learning.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre group details

Unique reference number	80278
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	451700
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1588
Centre leader	Maureen Wallis
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 338 8645
Email address	maureen.wallis@tameside.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 22503 Ridge Hill CC
- 22014 Millbrook CC

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